

On January 31, 1837, at a meeting of the Presbytery of Newark, held in the lecture room of the 1st Presbyterian Church, Charles C. Williams, Calvin Baldwin, Ezra D. Crane, Josephus W. Saunders and Nathias Hedges appeared before the Presbytery and requested on behalf of themselves and others in Newark, that they might be organized into a new church to be called the Central Presbyterian Church of Newark. This request was granted and the following ministers were appointed a committee to proceed with the organization of the church-Gideon M. Judd, A. D. Eddy, Selah B. Treat. This request was granted in the morning and the Presbytery took a recess till 2 in the afternoon. During this period the church was organized, and when the Presbytery convened in the afternoon the committee reported that the church had been organized with a membership of 80 persons received by certificate from other churches, and that three elders had been elected and set apart for that office. A call was then laid before the Presbytery from the new church addressed to Rev. Charles Hoover, who earlier in the proceedings of the Presbytery had been received from the Presbytery of Elizabeth Town, which call having been read and approved was placed before Mr. Hoover and was accepted by him. The Presbytery then made arrangements for his installation at 7 o'clock in the evening of the same day. At the installation Rev. David Magie of Elizabeth Town preached the sermon; Rev. A. D. Eddy presided and gave the charge to the pastor and Rev. John Ford, to the people.

The records of the Session tell us that the petitioners of this new church organization had previously advised with the Sessions of all the other Presbyterian Churches of the city, then three in number, and had received the approval of all for this new enterprise.

The elders who had been chosen and set apart for that office were- James M. Hedden, Charles C. Williams and Daniel Price.

The following were elected Trustees-John Hays, Calvin Baldwin, Ezra D. Crane, Josephus W. Saunders, Nathan Hedges, Frederick B. Betts, and Daniel D. Benjamin.

So this church was organized and fully equipped with the required number of officials for church life and church work, with a fair number of members, all in a single day.

The 60 original members were as follows-

James W. Saunders and Mrs. Sarah C. Saunders;
 Mrs. Eliza A. Hoover; Andrew Lemassena; Frederick B. Betts and Mrs. Catherine Betts; Irena Ann Young; Jacob Dalrymple; and Mrs. Caroline Dalrymple; William Burnet and Mrs. Catherine Burnet; Silas M. Todd and Mrs. Harriet Todd;
 Jonathan Pierson and Mrs. Martha Pierson; Daniel Price and Mrs. Charity Price;
 Nathan Hedges; George Crane; John Crane; Calvin Baldwin; Ann Burroughs; Esther Marsh; Mrs. Joanna M. Dean; Ezra D. Crane and Mrs. Margaret P. Crane; Daniel Y. Harrison and Mrs. Mary P. Harrison; Richard C. Pitt and Mrs. Jane Pitt; John Hays and Mrs. Phebe C. Hays; Joanna Foster; James V. Hedden; Charles C. Williams and Mrs. Eliza Williams; Isaac N. Crane and Mrs. Elizabeth Crane; Nancy Morehouse; Alexander P. Cobb; George Freeman and Mrs. Harriet Freeman; James Renton; D. B. Crane and Mrs. Crane; Thomas A. Brown; Mary Ann Hughes; William R. Todd and Mrs. Todd; Silas Ford and Mrs. Ford; Bartholomew West; Charles Austin and Mrs. Austin; Caroline Cook (Mrs. Douglas).

The first need of this new church organization was a place for worship. This was obtained, till better accommodations could be provided, in a public hall over the market house on the corner of Market and Church (now Halsey) Streets. Records give no information as to how long the congregation continued to worship in this hall. The earliest date of the Trustees Record is that of January 16, 1839, at which time the congregation had built and was occupying the new building.

As early as the fall of 1839 they had built and dedicated the first church building. It was a plain frame structure of 40 X 80 feet, erected on a leased lot 60 X 100 feet, on Market Street between Washington and Halsey Streets, at the cost of about \$3500.

The first communion after organization was held March 17, 1837, when 64 members were added to the original 60; 14 of whom were by profession of faith. At the next communion July 13, 1837, 9 were received by profession and 14, by certificate.

The first Sunday of January 1839 Calvin Baldwin was ordained as an elder.

During the entire pastorate of Mr. Hoover the total number of members received, including those who came with the organization, was 324, of whom 50 were by profession and 174 by certificate; of these 140 united with the church during the first year of its organization. During the following two years, 27 were received by examination and 57 by certificate--in all 84.

Mr. Hoover tendered his resignation as pastor of the church for reasons not recorded, which was accepted by the congregation December 23, 1839 with expressions of regret and undiminished confidence and kindest regards for their pastor. The pastoral relations were dissolved by the Presbytery January 21, 1840. William Belden, Jr., a licentiate of the Presbytery of New York, was called to succeed Mr. Hoover, March 2, 1840, the call was accepted by him April 21. He was ordained May 8th of the following year.

April 18, 1839 at a meeting of the Trustees it was reported that there was an urgent claim against the church for \$1200, which should have been paid long before; that they were in arrears for several months on their pastor's salary, and that it was imperative that \$200 be raised within 10 days towards meeting these debts; that Jacob Johnson be appointed collector and that if the required sum was not raised at once "the fair prospect of their enterprise will be seriously endangered."

The following 25th of April, "the pew holders of the church were divided off and assigned to the trustees respectively to wait on them for their subscriptions to raise a sufficient sum of money to liquidate the debts of the congregation and church; and the trustees agreed to meet again on Monday evening, at 7 o'clock, and report success." There seems to be no record of that evening meeting. It may have been informal, and the success

reported, if any, must have been very insufficient, as subsequent evidence proves.

At a meeting held September 18, 1839, a statement was made of the church's indebtedness as \$1598.35, towards which they had a prospect, that, by pew rents and private subscriptions they would be able to raise about \$905.

December 30, 1839 the Ladies Sewing Society was in existence with a credit to them of \$14.48 as proceeds of their industry, and of subscriptions obtained and collected by them to the amount of \$49.10, which with other sums donated for the purpose cancelled a bill for \$85.51 for carpets.

January 12, 1840 it was "Resolved that the church committee be instructed to procure and have erected a stove for the more effective warming of the church and that it be done immediately, and that the said committee use all due economy in said purchase and erection." This little paragraph regarding the purchase of a stove, illustrates somewhat the spirit of economy which was characteristic of the time.

A new lease of the ground occupied by the church was made June 13, 1840 for three years at \$110 per year. The following September it was determined to issue transferable stock to the amount of \$800, in shares of \$25 each to provide means with which to liquidate the entire debt of the church; the holders of the stock to be secured by a lien on the church building and to receive 5% interest for their investment; the notes to be payable January 1, 1843. In December the required sum was secured and a bond and mortgage on the church property to secure the payment of stock subscribed.

This seems to have been but a partial relief as it was reported May 7, 1841 that there was still a debt of \$755 which was not covered by the mortgage.

November 8, 1841, Mr. Belden resigned his pastorate and the relationship was dissolved by the Presbytery February 17, 1842 and at the same meeting a call to Rev. Mr. William Bradley was made and accepted, and in the evening of

the same day he was installed as pastor. Rev.W.R.Woods presided;Rev.Dr.S. W.Fisher preached the sermon;Rev.Dr.Samuel Fisher gave the charge to the pastor;and Rev.Dr.H.N.Brinsmade,to the people.

During Mr.Selden's pastorate of less than two years,30 were added to the church by profession and 34,by letter. There was evidently a prevailing spirit of discouragement chiefly from financial depression,which interfered with spiritual vitality and growth.

Mr.Bradley entered immediately upon his work as pastor. At the first communion of his pastorate April 7,1843,38 members were added to the church 19,by profession and 19 by certificate.

May 26,1843 Stephen C.Gould and Jonathan Pierson were chosen as elders and installed as such June 5,1842.

The Session was enlarged August 5,1847 by the election of Samuel Halsey,Dr.Elias L'Honnedieu and Jacob Johnson.

Mr.Bradley was pastor for 5 years and nearly 4 months,when at his request the Presbytery dissolved his pastoral relations with the church June 1,1848. The whole number of members received during his pastorate was 176,of these 36 were by profession and 140 by certificate.

After a vacancy in the pastorate of one year and nearly four months Rev.George C.Lucas,a member of the Troy Presbytery,was called by the congregation. The call was accepted October 3,1848 and Mr.Lucas was installed October 23,1849. Rev.J.S.Gallagher presided;Rev.Dr.S.H.Cox preached the sermon;Rev.Dr.George Duffield gave the charge to the pastor and Rev.A.D. Eddy gave the charge to the people.

From the time of Mr.Bradley's entering upon his services till his being succeeded by Mr.Lucas-from 1843 to the fall of 1848-the worldly condition of the church was one which taxed severely the energy and skill of the Trustees,as financiers,but they stood firm to their duty,and persevered amidst all discouragements. They found it difficult,not only to liquidate their general indebtedness,but even at times to pay the salary of their pastor.

On January 15, 1844 the following extract of a statement made before the Trustees- " It is well known to us all, that for the last year, our church has been, and is, to speak in the mildest terms, in a very precarious situation, hardly having a name to live; and many of us have felt and believed that as a church we could not long exist. This feeling has not been produced for want of members to constitute a church nor for want of union, but in consequence of pecuniary embarrassment. We are deeply in debt, a large amount of which has been long standing, and our debt has been slowly and steadily increasing, rendering our burden heavy, and spreading gloom and despondency through our ranks, and almost death to vital piety, a state in which we cannot exist. In consequence of this state of things, the Trustees for the past year have had frequent meetings for consultation and the deliberations have called to their aid the pastor and elders. At times, hope cheered us on; at times, gloom saddened our prospects, and as yet we accomplish little or nothing toward the temporal prosperity of the church. There never was a time since we had an organization when immediate action was so imperative to us as the present moment."

----Viewing our situation in all its aspects we have come to the conclusion that it is best to appoint now, committees to obtain subscriptions to purchase the lot we now occupy, or should a sufficient amount be obtained, to purchase elsewhere and erect a new house. We feel confident this is our best policy under existing circumstances and that with proper effort on our part (for we must act) and a determination to accomplish the work committed to our hands, we shall soon be able, as a church, acting under God's command to say, "we owe no man anything but love." It is said that "the darkest hour is just before daylight". There certainly appears to have been no darker hour in the history of this church than that which elicited this almost despondent deliverance. But at this time the records of Trustees failed for about a year, to have been preserved so the information of the events following are the recollections of some of those who were participants in them.

The question came-shall we surrender our property to our creditors and be dissolved? There was only one way to escape from this result and that was that a sufficient amount of money should be obtained without delay, to satisfy all pecuniary claim against the church.

The other Presbyterian Churches of the city-First, Second and Third-were appealed to for help in this emergency. At a meeting of the officials of these churches it was resolved that the organization should not be permitted to fail and that it be recommended to the liberality of the Christian public for aid to enable it not only to pay its most urgent debts and also to purchase the ground on which the church stood, thus cutting off future expense of the annual lease.

The committee was appointed to solicit by personal appeal, contributions from individuals in the several churches with the understanding that if the whole amount required should be subscribed it would become due; otherwise, it would be as though nothing had been subscribed. After earnest effort was put forth the needful amount failed to be obtained by perhaps \$1,500. There seemed to be no help for it, but that the Central Church must succumb to a decree of dissolution. The keys were in actual demand by the creditors. Just here an elder of the 3rd church Mr. John Taylor, interrupted and said "You must not give up; there is help for you yet." And he, beside giving liberally himself, made application to his personal friends in the community and obtained what was necessary to complete the required sum, to render valid the whole subscription. Thus the burden of debt was removed and the purchase effected. The light of day succeeded the darkest hour.

The pastorate of Mr. Lucas extended to October 4, 1854. During this period the church entered upon a new epoch of its existence. The years 1850-1851 were marked by more than usual religious interest. In 1850, 52 were added to the roll of church membership; and in 1851, 70 were added.

About this time the lot, which had been previously purchased by the

congregation together with the church building which had been the first church home, was sold and the proceeds invested in the purchase of a lot on Washington Street with a view to the erection of a new and every way more desirable church building upon it.

This was an undertaking far beyond anything which the congregation heretofore had courage to assume. The Trustees to whom were committed the execution of this enterprise on the church's behalf were- Henry C. Messler, Aaron O. Price, William O. Headley, Nehemiah Perry, Thomas Breeze, Moses T. Baker and Sylvester E. Moore.

The corner stone of the new building was laid by Rev. George C. Lucas, the pastor, July 29, 1851. The usual publications together with a history of the formation of the church, containing the names of all the pastors, elders, and members, from its organization down to the above date, were placed in a box under the stone. Appropriate religious exercises were held on the occasion- Prayer by Rev. William Aikman; Bible reading by Rev. Charles Beecher, prayer by Rev. Dr. J. F. Stearns and address by Rev. Dr. Samuel D. Burchard of N.Y. and Rev. A. D. Eady, D.D. of this city. The church was ready for occupancy the first of the year 1853, dedicated January 25, 1853. The dedicatory prayer was made by Rev. Dr. J. F. Stearns and the sermon preached by Rev. Dr. William Adams of N.Y. The hymns were all original. The opening hymn was written by Jacob Johnson, one of the elders; one, by Rev. Dr. Burchard of N.Y. and two by Dr. Abraham Coles of this city.

This enterprise was not conducted to this successful issue without remarkable liberality and sacrifice on the part of those who bore its chief burdens, and their memory will go down to generations of worshipers in this church.

There were no more despondant records on the pages of the Trustees' book. It demonstrates that where there is a determined will, there is a way. The day of small things had passed, and Central Church from this date has

Since the church organized the churches of the Presbyterian faith had increased from four to sixteen within the city limits. There was therefore no longer the necessity of coming to the center of the city to find a place to worship.

After the resignation of Dr. Scofield June 29, 1868, a call to Dr. William Findley was made November 4, 1868.

Data from "Forty Years & Beyond" by Rev. William Findley. 1877.

occupied its position among the other churches of the city in no mean capacity.

Mr. Lucas tendered his resignation as pastor September 30, 1854 and the congregation reluctantly and with expressions of regard and sympathy accepted his resignation and the pastoral relations were dissolved by the Presbytery October 4, 1854.

After nearly two years a call was extended to Dr. Charles M. Nickels of Barre, Mass. May 12, 1855. The call was accepted at a meeting of the Presbytery July 3, 1855 and in the evening of the same day Dr. Nickels was installed as pastor. This pastorate extended to September 9, 1855 when the pastor resigned because of ill health.

In October 29, 1851 the Trustees adopted a resolution permitting the ladies to purchase an organ for use in the church but without involving the Trustees in any pecuniary liability on account of it, and it was also resolved that there should be no interlude or accompaniment in the use of it, except the repetition of the two last lines of a verse. A committee to consult with the ladies was appointed. The organ was purchased but any farther history of this fact and the favor with which it may have been received, has not become a matter of history. It marked a new era, no doubt, in this department of church worship. After the resignation of Dr. Nickels the pulpit was supplied for over a year till Dr. William C. Scofield was installed as his successor November 1, 1855. During this interval, May 29, 1855 at a congregational meeting the Trustees were instructed to purchase the Andress property next to the church on the north side and in buying to give a mortgage of not more than \$4000 on the property. *The farm was located on this property*

Mr. Scofield was pastor for two years. During his pastorate several families removed from the bounds of the congregation to the suburbs and joined other churches. Thus the church lost valuable members. This was a discouraging circumstance to the pastor and people incident to the increased tendency to remove beyond the bounds of the center of business to more quiet surroundings.